

bayonet, and in a few minutes the Prussians, repulsed and annihilated, quitted the ground. Marshal Blucher, conscious that the possession of Ligny would decide the fate of the battle, returned to the charge with picked troops; and here, to use his own words, "commenced a battle that may be considered as one of the most obstinate mentioned in history." For five hours no less than 200 pieces of cannon vomited forth incessantly an iron hail upon this scene of carnage. French and Prussians, alternately vanquished and victors, disputed this ensanguined post hand to hand and foot to foot, and seven times in succession was it taken and lost. The Emperor expected every instant that Marshal Key was coming to take part in the action. From the commencement of the affair he had reiterated this order to him, to manoeuvre so as to surround the right of the Prussians; and he considered this diversion of such high importance as to write to the Marshal, and cause him to be repeatedly told that the fate of France was in his hands. Key answered that "he had the whole of the English army to encounter, yet he would promise him to hold out the whole day, but nothing more." The Emperor, better informed, assured him "that it was Wellington's advanced guard alone that made head against him," and ordered him anew "to beat back the English, and make himself master of Quatre Bras, cost what it might." The Marshal persisted in his fatal error. Napoleon, deeply impressed with the importance of the movement that Marshal Ney refused to comprehend and execute, sent directly to the 1st corps an order to move with all speed on the right of the Prussians; but, after having lost much valuable time in waiting for it, he judged that the battle could not be prolonged without danger, and directed General Ggrard, who had with him but 5000 men, to undertake the movement which should have been accomplished by the 20,000 men under Comte D'Erlon; namely, to turn St. Amand, and fall on the rear of the enemy.

This manoeuvre, ably executed, and seconded by the Guard attacking in front, and by a brilliant charge of the cuirassiers of General Delort's brigade, and of the horse grenadier guards, decided the victory. The Prussians, weakened in every part, retired in disorder, and left us masters of the field of battle, forty cannons and many standards.

On the left Marshal Ney, instead of rushing rapidly on Quatre Bras, and effecting the diversion that had been recommended to him, had spent twelve hours in useless attempts, and given time to the Prince of Orange to re-enforce his advance guard. The pressing orders of Napoleon not allowing him to remain meditating any longer, and desirous, no doubt, of recovering the time he had lost, Ney did not thoroughly reconnoitre either the position or the forces of the enemy, but rushed upon them headlong. The division of General Foy commenced the attack, and drove in the sharpshooters and the advanced posts. Bachelu's cavalry, aided, covered, and supported by this division, pierced and cut to pieces three Scotch battalions; but the arrival of fresh re-enforcements, led by the Duke of Wellington, and the heroic bravery of the Scotch, the Belgians, and the